In the Claims:

Please amend claim 3. The status of the claims is as follows:

1. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without inputting the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

wherein in the case where a same value has been preserved in said first password and said second password, said password verifying unit copies a value of said first password to the user input password and collates the same with said second password, thereby permitting an access.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without inputting the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization, ~~wherein~~

wherein said password preserving unit further has a user input password area to store a user input password input by a user, and

said password verifying unit is constructed in a manner such that at the start of the use of the apparatus such as turn-on of a power source, command reset, error reset, medium insertion, or the like, said first password is read out and written into said user input password area, an access permission is established if the first password is the same as the second password, or an access inhibition is established if the first password is not the same as

the second password, on the basis of a collation between the first password in said user input password area and the second password for access protection, and

after said access permission or inhibition is established, each time there is a password input of the user, the user input password is written into said user input password area and, subsequently, the access permission inhibition is established on the basis of a collation between the user input password in said user input password area and the second password for access protection.

4. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without inputting the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

wherein said password preserving unit further has a user input password area to store a user input password input by a user, and

said password verifying unit is constructed in a manner such that at the start of the use of the apparatus such as turn-on of a power source, command reset, error reset, medium insertion, or the like, the apparatus waits for the password input by the user in a state where said first password is read out and written into said user input password area, when there is the user password input, the user input password is overwritten into the first password in said user input password area, and after that, the password in said user input password area and said second password for access protection are compared and the access protection is controlled, and

when there is no user password input and/or in the case where the password is an empty character train even if there is the user password input, the comparison between the first password in said user input password area and the second password for access protection is executed and the access protection is controlled.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without inputting the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

wherein said password preserving unit preserves said first password and said second password for access protection into said medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said first password and said second password for access protection from said medium and stores into an apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

7. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without inputting the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

wherein said password preserving unit preserves said first password into a non-volatile memory of an apparatus main body and preserves said second password for access protection into the medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said second password for access protection from said medium and stores into the apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

8. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without inputting the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect

access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

wherein said password preserving unit preserves said second password for access protection into a non-volatile memory of an apparatus main body and preserves said first password into the medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said first password from said medium and stores into the apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

9. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein in said medium, a password preserving area to preserve said second password is provided in a specific area which cannot be accessed by an ordinary read command and write command.

10. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a

medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without inputting the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization the storing apparatus further comprising,

a password rewriting unit for rewriting said default input password or said first password for access protection on the basis of a dedicated command from an upper apparatus.

11. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said medium is fixedly enclosed in the apparatus main body.

12. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said medium is detachable from the apparatus main body.

13. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

wherein said password preserving unit preserves a plurality of kinds of passwords for access protection according to kinds of access protection, and

said password verifying unit permits an access by an ordinary command corresponding to the kind of said first password for access protection in which a collation coincidence is obtained.

14. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein

as said first passwords for access protection, said password preserving unit preserves a write/read password to permit an access by a read command and a write command and a read only password to permit only an access by the read command, and

said password verifying unit permits the access by the ordinary write command or read command when the collation coincidence of said write/read password is obtained and permits the access by only the ordinary read command when the collation coincidence of said read only password is obtained.

15. (Previously Presented) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can selectively protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, or permit access to the information without the second password, said apparatus comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium, and the second password for access protection; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password,

compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

the storing apparatus further comprising a validity term setting unit for setting a validity term into said first password.

16. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said validity term setting unit counts the number of using times of the apparatus by a counter and, when a value of said counter reaches a predetermined value, said validity term setting unit changes said first password to a different value.

17. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said validity term setting unit sets a time of a validity term and, when a present time in case of using the apparatus exceeds said validity term, said validity term setting unit changes said first password to a different value .

18. (Previously Presented) A method of selectively protecting access to information recorded on a medium with a second password for use with a computer-based system, or permitting access to the information without inputting the second password, comprising:

a password preserving step of preserving the second password and a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium; and

a password verifying step which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

wherein in the case where a same value has been preserved in said first password and said second password, in said password verifying step, a value of said first password is copied to the user input password and is collated with said second password, thereby permitting an access.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Presented) A method of selectively protecting access to information recorded on a medium with a second password for use with a computer-based system, or permitting access to the information without inputting the second password, comprising:

a password preserving step of preserving the second password and a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium; and

a password verifying step which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

wherein in said password preserving step, a plurality of kinds of passwords for access protection according to kinds of said access protection are preserved, and

in said password verifying step, an access by an ordinary command corresponding to the kind of said first password for access protection in which a collation coincidence is obtained is permitted.

21. (Previously Presented) A method of selectively protecting access to information recorded on a medium with a second password for use with a computer-based system, or permitting access to the information without inputting the second password, comprising:

a password preserving step of preserving the second password and a first password for selecting protect access or permit access to information recorded on the medium; and

a password verifying step which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization; and

when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization,

the method further comprising a validity term setting step of setting a validity term into said first password.